Sweet William

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by trashbambi

Summary

At first, when Will was still a trainee, their relationship had been strained. Hannibal liked things done just so, and found Will's attitude abrasive. In return, Will had found Mr Lecter's need for perfection irritating, rolling his eyes each time the man insisted on explaining the meanings behind the flowers he requested. Now it was Will who ran the establishment, the previous owner having passed away some years ago.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The bell over the door chimed as it opened, the gentle tinkling sound drawing Will from his reverie. Snipped flower stems in hand, he looked up, a smile tugging the corner of his mouth on seeing who it was.

Hannibal Lecter stepped into the shop holding a thermos under his arm as he closed the door behind him. One of his regulars, Hannibal often bought large orders of flowers, and he had been coming here before Will had even been hired.

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Over the years a kind of game developed between them: Hannibal dictating flowers and Will determining the set of meanings ascribed to them. He had only been wrong once, tripped up by Hannibal choosing a Lithuanian set of rules, but after that Will had read up on as many meanings in other cultures as possible—not only English speaking countries.

Will had tried to keep emotionally distant from Hannibal, but eventually he'd been unable to deny his growing feelings to himself any longer. These visits had become the highlight of his week, and today was no different.

What was different was the thermos placed on the counter and pushed toward him. He'd never been brought anything before.

"What's this in aid of?" Will asked, a brow raised as he took the container with hesitant hands. It was pleasantly warm to the touch.

"A gesture of goodwill," was all Hannibal said, giving Will a slight smile as he watched him uncap the lid and take a sip. It was the most delicious coffee Will had ever tasted. He took another sip before recapping it, returning Hannibal's smile as he placed it to the side.

"Thank you. It's delicious. Would you like to start arranging your order?"

"Certainly. To start, some white Ivy sprigs. A bouquet that would go well in a medium sized vase, I think."

"Anxious to please?"

"Somewhat," Hannibal confessed, lips pursing as he leant against the counter, watching Will retrieve several stems of white ivy.

They were clipped to the usual length, Will having long ago memorised the lengths Hannibal favoured for certain sized vases. The flowers were placed carefully onto the pre-prepared wrapping, rhythmic cutting soothing him after so many years of practice.

"Next, some Primrose."

“Can’t live without you? Piss a friend off or something?”

“Or something.”

The stems were clipped again, a simple, mindless task that he didn’t have to worry too much about messing up. Which was good, especially with the distraction of Hannibal leaning so casually in front of him, watching his movements.

When he’d first realised his attraction to the older man, Will had repeatedly messed up: slipping and cutting himself, snipping stems to the wrong length and tearing wrapping paper. Hannibal has been concerned at the sudden change in him so Will had lied, pretending it was due to sickness but that he’d needed the money so couldn’t take time off.

A week later he’d found a fat envelope of notes and a short missive telling him that his health was most important: Hannibal had given him almost a thousand dollars. Will had tried to return it but Hannibal had given him the coldest look and a lecture on not returning gifts to the giver. To this day, the bills still sat untouched, shoved in the back of a drawer in the envelope they’d arrived in. Will had never pretended to be sick again.

“Red Carnation, I believe, should be next.”

“Must be a pretty ardent friendship,” Will chuckled, moving to pick carnation stems, red blossoms vibrant against the whites of the surrounding flora. The corners of Hannibal’s mouth twitched in amusement.

“And some Red Chrysanthemums.”

“Ah, more than friendship then,” Will hummed, though his voice took on a morose tone.

Clearly this was a bouquet for someone Hannibal had very strong romantic feelings for. A heavy spark of jealousy bloomed like a weed in Will’s chest.

“Yes, quite a lot more,” Hannibal continued, oblivious, “Gardenia next please.”

Will nodded, retrieving the beautiful Veitchii gardenia that he knew Hannibal preferred. He assumed that would be all and began arranging the flowers, large chrysanthemums at the center and weaving the ivy through the interspersed carnations, primroses and gardenia.

The dual coloured arrangement was beautiful. Will was both pleased with it and wanted to trash it and tell Hannibal to get out of his shop. It hurt to think Hannibal didn’t return his feelings, that his affections lay elsewhere. That Will had no choice but to help Hannibal confess to whomever had caught his eye.

“Ah, one moment, something is missing from the arrangement.” Hannibal said from across the room.

Will hadn’t even realised he’d moved, but then Hannibal was making his way back toward the counter with something cradled in his hands. With a soft smile, he held out a few delicate sprigs of another flower, red and white with slightly ragged edges to the petals.

Will's eyes widened and he almost dropped the arrangement in his hands. A soft noise of pure emotion ripped itself from his throat, and he reached out and took the blossoms from Hannibal. Their fingers brushed together, eyes darting back and forth between the blooms and Hannibal's face.

"Sweet William," he murmured, staring at the flowers for a moment longer before carelessly dropping the bouquet to the counter. He reached across and grabbed Hannibal's tie, dragging him forward and into a desperate kiss.

"You asshole." Will said between breaths, groaning as Hannibal threaded his fingers through Will's curls. It was an awkward position with the counter between them, Will all but ready to climb onto it to get better access. Instead Hannibal broke contact for a moment and stepped around the obstacle, wrapping Will in his arms.

"You made me think it was for someone else. You absolute ass." Will grumbled, nipping at Hannibal's lips when he was once more in range. Hannibal just chuckled, wiping the tears from Will's cheeks as he cupped them with both hands.

"To see the joy blossom on your face, as the flowers in your care do, was worth the moment of distress before it."

"Like I said, you're an asshole," Will snarled. "An asshole who better not have anything planned for the rest of the evening. Because I'm going to close up shop, and you're going to come upstairs with me, and let me continue kissing you to make up for it."

"Nothing would please me more," Hannibal smiled, "My sweet William."

End Notes

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